AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

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AGITATE! EDUCATE! ORGANIZE!

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The A. F. of L. Weekly News Letter contains a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and such other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

SEAMEN ASK JUSTICE; APPEAL TO PRESIDENT

Washington, Feb. 23.—Officers and seamen serving in the United States merchant marine have protested to the president against the proposal to abolish seamen's committees on merchant vessels with naval reserve men under direction of the navy department. The protest is signed by Andrew Furuseth, president of the International Seamen's union, and William A. Westcott, president of the Masters, Mates and Pilots of the Pacific.

The campaign for displacement has been carried on by certain vessel owners, newspapers and by governmental officials. To vessel owners this plan means destruction of the seamen's union, the only barrier against annulment of the seamen's law, which denies to seamen the rights of citizens. Lascars and Hindus as sailors. These employers will appreciate this cheap labor privilege after the war.

In their protest, Furuseth and Westcott show the president that the displacement plan would be a waste of time and money, as it would not increase power, as three times as many men are required to man a merchant ship when operated by naval men than when operated by merchant seamen. It would also increase the number of additional men must be furnished with accommodation which can only be provided at the cost of cargo space.

"The navy can not furnish men of sufficient skill," say these unionists. "When the war is over, these men will serve men will go back to their shore employments. We will then have, as before, no men and very few officers. We can have no sea power without national seamen. The navy depends on seamen. Vessels are the seamen's tools and the tools will always belong to the nation you supply that can use them."

The president was informed of the agreement entered into between the United States shipping board, the seafaring unions and employers, that in such war conditions were provided and a joint appeal would be made to former seamen, no matter how active. This call has been held up because the Lake Carriers' association, operator on the great lakes, refused to accept the agreement because, these vessel owners say, it would mean recognition of the seamen's union.

R. R. OVERWORK MEN.

Washington, Feb. 23.—Indiscriminate violation of the 16-hour law by railroads is charged by Timothy Shea, acting president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen in charging the railroad wage commission working conditions which, he said, drove the men to either strike or work.

"Wages of $2.60 a day do not cover the actual living expenses of a married man," Shea said, "yet the men can leave the railroads and get work in factories at $5 a day and better conditions and working fewer hours."

Conditions such as these, he asserted, caused the labor turnover encountered by the Erie railroad in the last six months, when 3,000 of the men were employed and 3,700 quit.

Shea made an especial plea for the hostlers in the cases of engines while not in actual service. The safety of the railroads depends largely on the hostler's treatment of an engine, he added:

"The Santa Fe railroad officials are willing to employ a class of labor as hostlers whom they would permit to live with their wives their private automobiles indicates the difference between their official and personal attitude."

HOW TO SAVE COAL.

Washington, Feb. 22.—In a report on methods of saving coal, Van H. Manning, director of the bureau of mines, says the temperature in a house should be kept 5 to 10 degrees lower than is customary, a range of 70 to 74 degrees, without discomfort or any danger to health, especially if the air in the rooms is kept moist. By this means a saving of 25 per cent of doctor's bills and a reduction of 15 to 20 per cent of the fuel.

"The people are using too heat fewer rooms. "If one stops to think," he says, "that about 55 per cent of the families in North Dakota live, sleep and eat in the same room, living in three or four warm rooms will seem a modern fact. Everybody can get well by sleeping outdoors, why should we not keep well by well by sleeping in unheated bed rooms with the windows wide open?

"Faint hearted are the men in their fear of catching cold, heat their houses unnecessarily, and waste their country's coal, increase coal bills and invite sickness."

R. R. CLERKS GAIN.

Washington, Feb. 23.—The Brotherhood of Railway Clerks has signed agreement with the Seaboard Air Line railroad which provides for the eight-hour day and time and one-half. Seniority is recognized in the promotion of employes and necessary experience will be required clerks assigned special work away from home. Employment will be given preference against because of union affiliation or for committees work. Bonded employes will not be required to put up bond premiums and vacations with pay and reasonable transportation will be allowed as follows: One week's service, one week; three years, 10 days; ten years, two weeks. Arbitration machinery is provided and wages are increased 20 per cent, effective as of October 15, 1917.

ACTIVE IN LOS ANGELES.

Los Angeles, Cal., Feb. 23.—An almost unequalled opposition to organized labor is developing here. The city has had a stimulating effect on the Los Angeles trade union movement during the past year. The state Treasurer Myers of the central labor council reports the most unprecedented number of wage increases have been secured and more new trade unions were organized during the past year than in any previous year. Many newly formed organizations already in existence than ever before. The new unions total 30 and 50 applications to the established locals, increase the membership of the general labor movement 50%.

MAILERS RAISE WAGES.

Portland, Ore., Feb. 23.—The Mailers' union, has secured an agreement with newspapers of this city providing wages 50 cents a day. Hours of labor will be seven and one-half per night week and eight for day work. The mailers are also assured better sanitary conditions.

EARNED $21,995,042.

New York, Feb. 22.—Last year's profits of the American Can company were $21,995,042, almost double the $11,021,013 earned in the preceding year.

NATIONAL LABOR PLAN NEW BOARD'S PURPOSE

Washington, Feb. 23.—Secretary of Labor Wilson has appointed a commission of labor, employing and executive employers to formulate a national labor policy and avert strikes during the period of the war.

The five representatives of labor, whose names were submitted to Secretary of Labor Wilson by President Gompers, are:

Frank J. Hayes, president of the United Mine Workers.

W. H. Hutcheson, president of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

A. J. Franklin, president of the Brotherhood of Boiler Makers and Iron Ship Builders.

T. A. Hickey, president United Garment Workers.

Victor Olander, second vice president International Seamen's union and secretary-treasurer Illinois state federation of labor.

The five representatives of employers, recommended by the national industrial conference board, representing organized employers of this country, are:

H. A. Osborne, New York city, vice president of the Westinghouse Electric Manufacturing company; chairman of the executive committee of the national industrial conference board.

Charles F. Brooks, Ansonia, Conn., president of the American Brass company.

W. H. Van Dervoort, East Moline, Ill., president of the Root and Van Dervoort Engineering company.

L. F. Loree, New York city, president of the Delaware and Hudson company; chairman of the executive committee of the Kansas City Southern railway.

C. Edwin Michael, Roanoke, Va., president of the Virginia Bridge and Iron company.

Besides the members named for the commission, above, there will in turn select another man from public life, making in all 12 men to sit in the deliberations.

EDUCATE PORTO RICANS.

San Juan, Porto Rico, Feb. 23.—"The American people must, if they are to raise the standard of life of the Porto Rican people, continue to prosecute the work of education in the island, no matter how severe the financial drain," writes Santiago Iglesias, editor of Justicia, official newspaper of the Porto Rican federation of labor.

It is stated that the social and economic conditions of the Porto Rican worker is very low, that he is held in small esteem, and that the only support for his work has been cause his economic power and political influence are small.

"If the island," continues Iglesias, "be utilized merely or primarily as a means of exploiting opportunities for investment and commercial exploitation by American, Spanish, Porto Rican and other citizens, the policy of educating the people be held up on account of its expense and when the standard of life the standard of living of the people be not raised then the condition of Porto Rican laborers will be no one hundred or two hundred years hence, as Mr. Lindsay says, by the year 2000, when the sovereignty of Spain gave way to the dominion of the United States of America."

IS SCHWAB "KIDDING?"

Allentown, Pa., Feb. 22.—"Is Charley Schwab kidding the public?" asks Editor Timmis of the Labor Herald, published in this city.

The editor presents this question because of Schwab's statement in New York regarding a former statement that the workers would rule the world. Now, Mr. Schwab hastens to assure his alarmed associates that "what I said and what I mean when I stated that workmen will control government was that the men who will direct the policy of the world will spring from the humbler walks of life."

And then Schwab assumes the role of a joker.

"The Bethlehem plant has never had a strike owing to a co-operative plan by which the workers share in the profits," he says.

Editor Brown calls attention to the Bethlehem strike of 1910, when 18,000 men struck for work for 26 cents an hour and for the right to belong to the union to abolish Sunday work. State cossacks murdered innocent people and the strike was lost. It is the hardest fought in the history of this state.

HUMOR IN GRIM WAR TIME.

Washington, Feb. 22.—Uncle Sam refuses to be "cold under aiding," even in these days of grim war.

This is shown by the following statement by the "Navy and Army Citizens' campaign council in the interest of war insurance for men in the service.

"The bus drivers of New York city—well known as the daredevil terrorists of the metropolis"—know the hazards of war. They also know how to meet them. A platoon of these drivers enlisted in the United States army and went to France. Now they drive army trucks for Uncle Sam. The reports just received from Camp Dix show they are not the sort of men who have applied for the full amount of government insurance. This hint from actuarial experience may be of value to others."

PRINTERS RAISE WAGES.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Feb. 23.—Typographical union No. 191 has raised its newspaper scale $2 a week until July 1, when these figures will be advanced $1 a week:

Sheridan, Wyo., Feb. 23.—The Typographical union has raised wages $2 a week all around and secured a one-hour reduction. The new scale is: Day work—Jobmen, floormen and machinists, $28; foremen, $30; night work—Handmen and operators, $30; machinists, $28; foremen, $32. Night work—Handmen and operators, $32; machinists, $30; foremen, $36. Machinist-operators will receive $1 per week additional for each machine attended.

OPPOSE STOCKHOLDERS' PAY.

Washington, Feb. 22.—In opposing the government's plan to pay railroad stockholders the guaranteed profit equal the average dividend for the last three years, United States Senator Johnson declared in the senate today:

"Where in the man who would have suggested that we pay the men we are to send to the trenches a sum equal to the average of their last three years' earnings? He would have been laughed to scorn on the floor."

WILL NOT CONSCRIPT.

Ottawa, Ontario, Feb. 22.—The government announced that it will not conscript farm labor under the military service act.

Pro-War Declaration By A. F. of L. Executive Council

Washington, Feb. 21.—There can be no compromise in the present struggle between free democracy and Prussian militarism, the executive council, declared the executive council of the A. F. of L., at its quarterly meeting, held in this city February 10-17. Other portions of the declaration follow:

"The present labor lies in opportunity for freedom. The workers of America will not permit themselves for a moment to become slaves. If the war will not vitally change our own lives, a victory for Germany would mean a pan-German empire dominating Europe and exercising a world balance of power which Germany will seek to extend by force into world control.

"Prussian rule means oppression, checks, unfreedom in every relation of life.

"Prussianism has its roots in the old ideal under which men sought to rule by suppressing the minds and wills of their fellows. It fights the new ideal of government without force or chains—political or industrial—based upon the principle of freedom for all.

"Since the reconstruction shall soon come from the German workers within that country it is now plain that the responsibility to employ the agencies of force will come only when democracy has defeated autocracy in the battle fields and wins the right to reconstruct relations between nations and men. The peace parleys between Russia and Germany have shown the futility of, diplomatic negotiations until Prussian militarists are convinced that they cannot superimpose their will on the rest of the world. Force is the basis of their whole organization and is the only argument they will understand.

"The present dealings in Germany in protest against the military government have shown that the German government is still stronger than the movement for German emancipation. German freedom is ultimately the problem of the German people. But the defeat of Prussian autocracy on the battlefield will bring an opportunity for German liberty at home.

"Upon the workers of the ships rests in building the ship is performing just as much service to country to our republic as the sailor who takes the ship across or the gunner in the gun.

"This is a time when all workers must soberly face the grave importance of the issues at stake and decide industrial matters with a consciousness of the world relation of each act.

"The problem of production industrial efficiency and unnecessary slaughter of fellow men is squarely up to the workers—you, to employes and employers. Production depends upon materials, tools, management, and the development and maintenance of industrial morale. Willing co-operation comes not only from doing justice but from recognizing justice. The worker is a human being whose life has value and dignity to him. He is willing to sacrifice for an ideal but not for the selfish gain of another. Justice begets peace. Consideration begets co-operation. These conditions are essential to the highest efficiency. Peace is necessary to win the war.

"Upon the government and upon employers falls the preponderance of responsibility to securing greatest efficiency. Workers demand standard of human welfare and consideration of the human side of production. Workers are ready for service of efficient production.

"Give workers a decent place to live, provide them decent conditions to take all their wages for bare existence, give them agencies whereby grievances can be adjusted and industrial justice assured, make it plain that their labor counts in winning a war for greater freedom, not for private profiteering—and workers can be confidently expected to do their part. Workers are loyal. They want to do their share for the republic and for winning the war.—Executive Council American Federation of Labor.

EVEN STRIKEBREAKERS DEMAND SOME RIGHTS

Camas, Ore., Feb. 23.—Even strikebreakers, it seems, have rights, former president of Harvard university, referred to as "heroes," reject the principles of the United States supreme court in the Hitchman case. This decision was last December against the United Mine Workers, held that where an employer secures by misrepresentation a worker not to join a union while in his employ, he would be granted an injunction against trade unionists if they were suspicioned of attempting to "break" this contract.

The decision is in addition to anti-union employers to secure contracts with their strikebreakers which federal courts will do the rest.

The Crown Willamette Paper company was one of the first employers in the country to act on this hint, but the company now discovers that the courts will not surrender their constitutional right to join a union and it has abandoned the yellow dog contract scheme.

The new contract is a decidedly milk-and-water affair and is as follows:

"The undersigned hereby accepts employment with the Crown Willamette Paper company for work in Camas, Wash., and agrees to terminate either in Washington or Oregon, with knowledge that in accepting employment the company intends to work in your mills in lieu of former employes or others who are on strike, or who may hereafter go on a strike, and the undersigned voluntarily accepts such employment with knowledge of said facts. The undersigned intends to work in said mills as an individual and not as a member of any labor union."

WAGES MUST INCREASE.

Quincy, Mass., Feb. 23.—In urging members of the Quincy Typographical union to insist on the union's rate, the Granite Cutters' Journal says:

"The costs of living keep on increasing and they must increase. Members will have need to insist more with their employers for higher wages or they will find themselves unable to be nourished and their homes kept warm and comfortable, in order that they may be able to work efficiently. It is simply nonsense to expect them to continue to work for the old wages and to be expected to pay the excessive rates for the costs of living.

"We are not responsible for the increased cost of living. If the public generally had brought the proper pressure to bear on the present officials to have made it a crime, punishable by heavy fines and imprisonment for any one to unjustly or unwarrantably raise the costs of living, the present situation would not exist. The wealth and the workers suffering for lack of warmth."

WAR-SAVINGS STAMPS SALE.

Washington, Feb. 22.—Treasury receipts from the sale of war-savings stamps has passed the $30,000,000 mark, and the new goal is $50,000,000, the rate of $11,000,000 a week.

Thrift societies are organizing into war savings societies' in every county in the United States, in Hongkong, China, Japan, Mexico, Cuba, and in Buenos Aires and other South American cities, are converting their small savings into the purchase of government securities and pouring funds into the treasury war chest at the rate of $10,000,000 a week, it is said.

These government "baby bonds" are in the form of certificates of Uncle Sam and are as safe an investment as any other security issued by that reliable old gentleman.

TO LIMIT INJUNCTIONS.

Olympia, Wash., Feb. 23.—A bill to limit the injunction power of courts in labor disputes was one of the legislative measures filed with the secretary of state by the joint legislative committee of the state federation of labor, state grange, farmers' union and the direct legislation league. The other measures are a bill providing for all labor, a non-partisan bill and a bill to permit municipal corporations to go into the produce marketing and distributing business.

STOVE MOUNTERS GAIN.

Detroit, Mich., Feb. 23.—Officers of the Stove Mounters' International union report substantial gains by practically all locals. Wages have been raised from 30 to 6i per cent, and in many cases include shorter hours and improved working conditions.

OPPOSE MINE CONTROL.

Spokane, Wash., Feb. 22. — The northwest mining convention has decided against government control of mines, but the operators are not opposed to the government controlling them "to encourage the production of rare metals."

URGE MILITARY INSURANCE.

Washington, Feb. 22.—With the extension of 60 days of the date that members of the country's military forces can take out insurance under the war insurance act, the bureau of war risk insurance is doing its utmost to get every man under the colors to subscribe for this insurance on or before April 12 next. The legislation provides for insurance from $1,000 to $10,000 at a cost of $6 per year from $1 to $8 a month. The plan goes far beyond anything of a similar character every attempted in the history of the world and it would be difficult to find a single trade union which is not represented in the ranks of the army. President Gompers has issued an appeal to organized labor to assist in getting the workers of the land to see that the families of the killed and wounded through this insurance rather than through the charity of the state or the generosity of individuals. Labor has given its best sons as soldiers and sailors make application for this insurance.

"The government," says President Gompers, "has performed its full share in establishing this means for the protection of those who are risking their lives for our country. The enlisted man, in turn, is doing his part. This plan is voluntary, and that is to accept the offer of the government and live up to its terms.

"Soldiers and sailors are hereby urged to apply for insurance. Labor unions everywhere are urged to appeal to their friends among the delinquents and urge them not to let this opportunity to benefit themselves escape."

ELECTRIC POWER URGED.

New York, Feb. 22.—Nation-wide electrification of railroads as the solution of the fuel and transportation problem was urged by W. Bain Dick, jr., president of the General Electric company and president of the American institute of electrical engineers. Mr. Rice asserted that electrifying about 40,000 miles of track, or a little of about 100,000,000 tons of coal a year, to the country in addition to saving $60,000,000 in fuel, that the hauling capacity of the roads would be increased by the use of electric engines, he said, to a marked degree.

"Where electricity has been substituted for steam in the operation of railroads," he said, "an increase 20 per cent increase in available capacity of the tracks and other facilities has been demonstrated. This increased capacity has been due to the greater flexibility of the electric locomotive, largely to the increased reliability and capacity under all conditions of service, of electrical apparatus and other features, a speeding-up of train schedules by some 25 per cent under average conditions."

MINE DEATHS INCREASE.

Washington, Feb. 23.—Demoralization of the coal mining industry because of time lost through cars is responsible for the highest fatality record in coal mining in the United States in the last seven years, says the federal bureau of mines. Last year there were 2,452 men killed in coal mining, which is an increase of 76 over the 1916 record. Secretary of the Interior Lane says that the falling up of the mines was conducive to the high death rate.

"Mines which have not been able to obtain an adequate supply of coal cars," says Secretary Lane, "have in many cases, had a marked decrease